

Claims

What is claimed is:

5 1. A process for making a molded article having a granular or speckled appearance, comprising:

 color compounding a first polymeric material and at least one pigment to form a color compound of the at least one pigment with the first polymeric material;

10 comminuting the color compound to form a reduced particle size color compound;

 mixing the reduced particle size color compound with a second polymeric material having a color different from or contrasting with the at least one pigment to form a mixture wherein the reduced particle size color compound is distributed in the second polymeric material; and

15 molding the mixture to form a molded article having a granular appearance.

20 2. The process of claim 1, wherein the color compound has a substantially uniform distribution of the at least one pigment within the first polymeric material.

 3. The process of claim 1, wherein the color compounding comprises extrusion of the first polymeric material and the at least one pigment.

25 4. The process of claim 1, wherein reducing the particle size comprises one or more of cutting, chopping, grinding and milling the color compound.

5. The process of claim 1, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material are substantially similar polymeric materials in one or more of melt flow index, density, and Vicat softening point.

5 6. The process of claim 1, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material are substantially identical in one or more of melt flow index, density, and Vicat softening point.

10 7. The process of claim 1, wherein the molding is rotational molding.

8. The process of claim 1, wherein the granular appearance includes a controllable granule size.

15 9. The process of claim 8, wherein the controllable granule size is controlled in the step of reducing particle size.

10. The process of claim 1, wherein the molded article is free of one or more of additives, fillers, dispersion aids, solvents and/or modifiers.

20 11. The process of claim 1, wherein the granular appearance comprises contrasting color properties.

25 12. The process of claim 1, wherein the melting temperatures of the color compound and the second polymeric material are substantially the same.

13. The process of claim 1, wherein the molded article is substantially free of filler.

14. The process of claim 1, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material comprise one or more of LLDPE, LDPE, MDPE, LMDPE, or HDPE.

5 15. The process of claim 1, wherein the first polymeric material and second polymeric material each have a density in a range from about 0.924 to about 0.942.

10 16. The process of claim 15, wherein the densities of the first polymeric material and second polymeric material are substantially the same.

15 17. The process of claim 15, wherein the densities of the first polymeric material and second polymeric material are sufficiently similar to provide a substantially randomly uniform distribution of particles of the color compound within the molded article.

20 18. The process of claim 1, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material are sufficiently similar that the molded article displays at least one physical property corresponding to a single polymeric material.

25 19. The process of claim 1, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material are sufficiently similar that the color compound is substantially randomly and uniformly distributed in the second polymeric material in the molding step.

20. The process of claim 1, wherein the pigment is provided in the form of a colorant comprising a polymer and the at least one pigment.

21. The process of claim 1, wherein the step of color compounding is carried out on reground polymeric material, in which the first polymeric material and the at least one pigment are provided in the form of reground polymeric material.

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22. A molded article having a granular or speckled appearance with contrasting color properties, comprising particles of a color compound of a first polymeric material and at least one pigment; and

10 a second polymeric material having a color different from or contrasting with the pigment,

wherein in the molded article the second polymeric material forms a substantially uniform background and the particles of the color compound are substantially randomly and uniformly distributed throughout the second polymeric material and are substantially distinct from the second polymeric material.

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23. The article of claim 22, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material are substantially similar polymeric materials in one or more of melt flow index, density, and Vicat softening point.

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24. The article of claim 22, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material are substantially identical in one or more of melt flow index, density, and Vicat softening point.

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25. The article of claim 22, wherein the article is free of one or more of additives, fillers, dispersion aids, solvents and/or modifiers.

26. The article of claim 22, wherein the density of the color compound and the second polymeric material are substantially the same.

27. The article of claim 22, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material comprise one or more of LLDPE, LDPE, MDPE, LMDPE, or HDPE.

28. The article of claim 22, wherein the first polymeric material and second polymeric material each have a density in a range from about 0.924 to about 0.942.

29. The article of claim 28, wherein the densities of the first polymeric material and second polymeric material are substantially the same.

30. The article of claim 28, wherein the densities of the first polymeric material and second polymeric material are sufficiently similar to provide a substantially randomly uniform distribution of particles of the color compound within the article.

31. The article of claim 22, wherein the first polymeric material and the second polymeric material are sufficiently similar that the article displays at least one physical property corresponding to a single polymeric material.

32. The article of claim 22, wherein the pigment is provided in the form of a colorant comprising a polymer and the at least one pigment.

33. The article of claim 22, wherein the first polymeric material and the at least one pigment are provided in the form of reground polymeric material.